

Message Text

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14

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

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R 100821Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2029

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LOURENCO MARQUES 0446

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, MZ

SUBJ: CLAIMED FRELIMO ROCKET ATTACK ON ESTIMA

REF: A) LOURENCO MARQUES 701 OF NOV 22, 72; B) LOURENCO
MARQUES 568 OF SEP 26, 72

1. SUMMARY: REPORTS OF ROCKET ATTACK ON ESTIMA ALDEAMENTO
IN TETE DISTRICT ALLEGEDLY CAUSING NUMEROUS CASUALTIES AND
HEAVY DAMAGE, TURN OUT TO BE HIGHLY EXAGGERATED.

2. LACK OF RELIABILITY OF REPORTING ON MOZAMBIQUE INSURGENCY
ILLUSTRATED BY FOLLOWING EPISODE: REPORTER COLIN SMITH OF
LONDON OBSERVER TOLD CONGEN OFFICER JUNE 27 HE HAD ENCOUNTERED
RHODESIAN IN TETE WHO CLAIMED THAT WHILE HE WAS WORKING IN
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ESTIMA (SITE OF CLOSEST FULL LENGTH RUNWAY TO CABORA BASSA

AND IMPORTANT CLUSTER OF ALDEAMENTOS 20 KMS EAST OF SONGO) ON JUNE 18, FRELIIMO GUERRILLAS LAUNCHED SEVERE ROCKET ATTACK, FIRING 46 ROCKETS, KILLING FIVE PORTUGUESE, DAMAGING TWO HELICOPTERS, AND KILLING SHEEP AND GOATS IN NEIGHBORING ALDEAMENTO. SMITH SAID HE HAD SEEN THREE-FOOT CHUNK OF ROCKET RHODESIAN HAD IN HIS TRUCK. RHODESIAN SAID HE WAS QUITTING HIS ESTIMA JOB AND GOING HOME. SMITH APPARENTLY FILED HIS STORY BEFORE CHECKING IT OUT. RECENT FRELIIMO BROADCASTS HAVE AMPLIFIED THE INCIDENT.

3. AT REGULAR MONTHLY BRIEFING FOR CONSULAR CORPS JUNE 28, MILITARY SPOKESMAN ACKNOWLEDGED "MINOR" ATTACK ON ESTIMA JUNE 18, INCLUDING 122 MM ROCKET FIRE, BUT CLAIMED IT ONLY LIGHTLY WOUNDED ONE SOLDIER.

4. MOZAMBIQUE ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND COMMUNIQUE NO. 15/73 PUBLISHED JUNE 29 REFERRED TO FRELIIMO ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ITS ATTACK ON ESTIMA HAD CAUSED, IN ADDITION TO "ENORMOUS MATERIAL DAMAGE", "HUNDREDS OF DEAD AND WOUNDED AMONG PORTUGUESE AND FOREIGN MILITARY AND CIVILIANS", AND HAD REDUCED ESTIMA'S AIRFIELD INSTALLATIONS AT ASHES. COMMUNIQUE SAID IN FACT, ON JUNE 18 AT 2115 HOURS, "SOME GRENADES" WERE LAUNCHED AGAINST ESTIMA WHICH CAUSED NO MATERIAL DAMAGE AND LIGHTLY WOUNDED ONE MILITARY. COMMUNIQUE CONTINUED SUCH EVENT WOULD ORDINARILY NOT WARRANT HIGH COMMAND COMMUNIQUE; ASSERTED THERE WERE NO FOREIGNERS IN ESTIMA AND THAT EVERYTHING IS NORMAL THERE; DESCRIBED FRELIIMO ANNOUNCEMENTS AS HAVING REACHED STAGE WHERE THEY CAN NO LONGER BE REGARDED SIMPLY AS "MONSTROUS DISHONESTY", BUT RATHER AS REFLECTION OF STATE OF DEMENTIA ON PART OF FRELIIMO LEADERS.

5. PRESS PLAY CONTINUED ON JUNE 30 WITH ARTICLE ON CATTLE FAIR HELD IN ESTIMA ON JUNE 23 WITH HUNDREDS OF FARMERS PARTICIPATING, ON EXACT SPOT WHICH FRELIIMO CLAIMED HAD BEEN REDUCED TO ASHES. "NOTICIAS" OF JULY 2 CARRIED LENGTHY EDITORIAL BY GUILLERME DE MELO, MOZAMBIQUE'S WINDIEST WRITER, POURING SCORN ON FRELIIMO CLAIMS AND ON COLIN SMITH REPORT. SAME PAPER TWO DAYS LATER CARRIED ARTICLE BY SANTOS MARTINS, WRITING FROM TETE, WITH FURTHER DETAILED DENIALS.

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YM BRITISH CONGEN HUGH BYATT, WHO HAD LEFT ESTIMA ON JUNE 18 JUST PRIOR TO ALLEGED ATTACK, TOLD ME HE HAD HEARD NOTHING ABOUT IT WHILE IN TETE DISTRICT, SAID HE HAD CAUTIONED SMITH THAT STORY WAS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE, AND ADDED HE CONSIDERED SMITH NAIVE AND LITTLE VERSED ON AFRICAN REALITIES. HIS JUDGMENT CONFIRMED BY BELGIAN AMBASSADOR IN LISBON WHO DURING RECENT VISIT IN MOZAMBIQUE WAS IN ESTIMA TWO DAYS AFTER ATTACK AND SAW NO SIGN OF ANY DAMAGE.

7. COMMENT: WE CONCLUDE ESTIMA "ATTACK" TAKES ITS PLACE WITH
ALLEGED BOMBING OF TETE AIRPORT AND TOWNSHIP LAST NOVEMBER
(REF A) AND SEPTEMBER SHELLING OF MUEDA (REF B) ON FRELIMO
FICTION BESTSELLERS LIST.

VAN OSS

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